

23 candidates for various offices speak at rally

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Qualifications and experience were intertwined into a single thread through the speeches of 23 candidates at a political rally sponsored by the Brownsville chapter of the Knights of Columbus.

With the May 3 primary only two weeks away, the gathering Thursday was rather tranquil as candidates were allowed three minutes each to tell of their qualifications and reasons for seeking office.

State Rep. **Rene Oliveira**, D-Brownsville, the first to speak at the rally, cited his record of "results" as a three-term legislator. This includes co-sponsoring of the Indigent Health Care package that "not only eased the burden of human suffering, but (also) saved tax dollars."

He said he voted in favor of the education reform bill, with the support of a state teachers group, that resulted in increased space for Brownsville's congested classrooms.

Oliveira, who said he favors pari-mutual wagering and lotteries, said the state Legislature is

facing record expenditures in the next session and that the most important issue before legislators is to find ways of increasing state revenue to offset rising expenditures.

His opponent, **Eddie Lucio**, charged that **Oliveira** voted for free public education for illegal aliens. But **Lucio** was referring to a bill **Oliveira** supported that allowed the state Legislature to seek tax revenues to educate the children of undocumented workers after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that they be allowed to attend U.S. schools.

Lucio, who favors tort reforms as a means of controlling the liability insurance crisis, said he is a strong supporter of education and law enforcement.

Judge **Diego Leal**, 103rd State District Court, asked the audience to consider his experience as a judge and 25 years as a lawyer in his re-election bid. His opponent **Antonio Balderas** also cited his experience as a prosecutor and public defender, and his commitment to the office by taking a leave of absence without pay as an assistant district attorney to inform the voters of his candidacy

and ability.

Another district court judge, **Menton Murray Jr.**, 357th State District Court judge, cited the support he received by the lawyers whose work is inherent to the judiciary process in reference to a 109-26 vote by county bar association members in support of his candidacy.

"You need to look at the experience first and clearly I have the experience I've done it all," **Murray** said of his experience as a prosecuting attorney, city attorney and court-at-law judge.

In response, Judge **Roy Valdez** said he will stand on his experience as a judge and in presiding over civil and criminal cases as the Cameron County Court-at-Law No. 1. He referred to the position as a powerful one in which decisions are made that affect the daily lives of people before the court system.

"Rest assured that if I didn't have the qualifications I wouldn't be here before you," he said.

Harlingen attorney **Noe Robles** talked of his experience as a civil lawyer and added that his opponent **Rick Lara** lacks it. **Robles** criticized the county bar associa-

tion's endorsement of **Lara's** candidacy saying that "lawyers should not control the bench" but that judges should account themselves to the people.

Lara countered by mentioning his 4½ years of court experience as an assistant district attorney and charged that **Robles** does not have similar trial experience. In reference to the bar association's endorsement, **Lara** said he was endorsed because its members respected him as a trial lawyer and that he owes the members nothing in exchange for their support.

In the county judge race, the sole Republican candidate, **Lenny McDonald** once again pitched the need for a two-party system in Valley politics. In predicting that Republicans will win the next presidential and gubernatorial elections, he again vowed to solicit Republican help from Austin and Washington if he is elected.

Television and radio broadcast personality **Don Blakes** told the audience that he decided to get involved in politics because of his experiences in broadcasting, the different viewpoints and problems expressed by guests on his show.

He said it was time for him to "quit sitting on the fence" and get involved.

Brownsville evangelist **Alex Resendez** took to the podium like it was a pulpit and announced that "God has appointed me to say the truth and help you people."

"I will tell you what, nobody will pull my strings," he said and reaffirmed his support of the sheriff's department and teachers.

Former County Judge **Ray Ramon** stood firmly on his 12 years' experience as a county judge and called on voters to support a candidate who already knows the workings of county government. He said the office needs an able and qualified full-time judge.

Jack Goodits said that his military and civil record reflects the experience of an administrator and that he will devote a full-time commitment to the job of county judge. As to the question of being bilingual, **Goodits** said he has a conversational knowledge of Spanish and assured the audience that he would have someone fluent in the language available at

all times at his office if elected.

Gus Zavaletta referred to himself as a creative candidate with progressive ideas for the county. He said he is seeking the seat to get involved in county affairs and that he will have his office open to all county residents.

Desi Rios, in a departure from his reference to his experience as a Texas Southwest College administrator, reflected on his years as a blue-collar worker who earned a bachelor's and master's degree while working to support his family before becoming a college administrator.

Other candidates who spoke at the rally included County Treasurer **Mike Puckett** and his challenger **Noe Diaz** and Precinct 2 Place 2, Justice of the Peace **Ed Sarabia**.

Precinct 2 commissioner candidates **Ernesto Garner** and **Juan Rivera** also spoke at the rally. Incumbent **Mike Cortinas** and candidate **Andy Carter** did not attend.

In the county clerk race, candidates **Toscha de la Peña**, **Joe Rivera** and **Joe Bargarrena** spoke. Incumbent **Mike Sheldon** did not attend at the rally.